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INDIAN MISSIONS
of the
UNITED STATES



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INDIAN MISSIONS of the UNITED STATES

AT HEART, the American Indian, as may be said of most primitive peoples, is essentially a devout person, his sacrifices, his fasts, his fetishes, his ceremonies being most rigidly adhered to, having predominance over all other matters of merely temporal importance. He acknowledges the existence of a Supreme Being, appeals to Him in matters of importance to himself and his tribe, and expects to spend the life beyond in accordance with his merits. To him, religion as introduced by the whites was no new thing; the dogma was changed, but it was simply a variation of the old theories and the old ceremonies of his fathers, and in this variation the attraction lay.

Missionary efforts among the Indians date from the earliest acquaintance of that race with the white man. Most particularly were Spain and France aggressive in their missionary labors, many of the early explorers or voyageurs being themselves representatives of their churches and countries in an official capacity, their work being under the direct supervision of their governments. The Spanish missions were propagated by the Franciscan Fathers, and the French by the Jesuits, the former coming into the country through the south, and the latter through the north.

The earliest records are those of 1542, when Coronado, in search for the Seven Cities of Cibola, was accompanied by his priests in his explorations among the tribes of Mexico and as far north as the present state of Nebraska.

It was not until a century later that the first Protestant missions were founded in New England, under the supervision of John Eliot, of the Congregational Church. It has been noted that England left her missionary efforts to the philanthropically-inclined individuals or to organized societies.

The early missionaries contributed not only to the religious advancement of the Indians, but historical and geographical matters of importance were not neglected, preserving most valuable material which would otherwise have been lost to posterity. The archives of the old Spanish missions of the Southwest and of the French missions of Canada and the Great Lakes region are replete with invaluable manuscripts, maps of early explorations, diaries of the early discoverers, notes on the habits, languages, and characteristics of the tribes when their first acquaintance was made by the whites.

The white man's civilization was advanced by planting colonies on the frontier, placing the white race in direct contact with the primitive red man; the very outposts were held by the missions under the direction of fearless men who, in the interests of their State or of their religion, made a highroad for those who came after.

The later years were devoted more strictly to religious and educational instruction. The Moravians were the real pioneers in Protestant denominational work along educational lines, followed by the establishment of schools by the Friends in 1795, the Baptists in 1807, the American Board (Congregational and Presbyterian) in 1810, Episcopal in 1815, Methodist in 1816, Presbyterian (North) in 1833, Methodist (South) in 1844, the American Missionary Association (Congregational) in 1846, Dutch Reformed in 1857, Presbyterian (South) in 1857, Hicksite Quaker in 1869, United Presbyterian in 1869, Unitarian in 1886, Reformed Presbyterian (Covenanter) in 1889. Almost all denominations are represented in this work, ranging from the Roman Catholic and the various sects of Protestantism to the Orthodox Russian among the Indians of Alaska, and the Mormon Church of Utah, and practically every tribe has come under the influence of the teaching of some Christian religion, led by such men in the earlier days as Samson Occum, the Mohican student of Rev. Eleazer Wheelock's Indian School in Connecticut; James B. Finley, David Zeisberger, and other pioneers of Ohio; the teachers of the Society of Friends in Pennsylvania and adjoining States; Evan Jones and Samuel Worcester among the Cherokee of the South; the Williamsons, Riggs, and Ponds of the Sioux country; Bishops Whipple and Hare in Minnesota; Whitman, Lee, and Spalding among the tribes of the northwest coast; Father Hamilton among the Omaha; Father de Smet among the northern tribes west of the Mississippi; Cyrus Byington among the Choctaw; Father Ravalli as priest and physician among the western tribes; a list much too lengthy to enumerate, taken from all Christian religions.

In 1832, four Nez Perce Indians came to St. Louis, then the seat of the western activities among the Indians. The story is told that they came in search of the "White Man's Book of Heaven." They were feted, and just prior to their return to their home, two of them having died, one of the survivors is reported to have made a speech, the authenticity of which is disputed, but which is well worthy of repetition:

"I come to you over the trail of many moons from the setting sun. You were the friends of my fathers, who have

all gone the long way. I came with an eye partly open for my people, who sit in darkness. I go back with both eyes closed. How can I go back blind, to my blind people? I made my way to you with strong arms through many enemies and strange lands that I might carry back much to them. I go back with both arms broken and empty. Two fathers came with us, they were the braves of many winters and wars. We leave them asleep here by your great waters and wigwams. They were tired in many moons and their moccasins wore out.

"My people sent me to get the 'White Man's Book of Heaven.' You took me to where you allow your women to dance as we do not ours, and the book was not there. You took me to where they worship the Great Spirit with candles and the book was not there. You showed me images of the good spirits and the picture of the good land beyond, but the book was not among them to tell us the way. I am going back the long and sad trail to my people in the dark land. You make my feet heavy with gifts and my moccasins will grow old carrying them, yet the book is not among them. When I tell my poor blind people after one more snow, in the big council, that I did not bring the book, no word will be spoken by our old men or by our young braves. One by one they rise up and go out in silence. My people will die in darkness, and they will go a long path to other hunting grounds. No white man will go with them, and no White Man's Book to make the way plain. I have no more words."

The United States Government contributed annually to the education of the Indian, such funds passing through the hands of the missionaries, until the year 1870. It was about this time that the Indian country was apportioned among the missionary societies, both of Catholic and Protestant persuasion, each society having its own particular field of labor, thereby establishing the foundation for the large communities of Indians found in every section of the country in which communities practically every person is found to belong to the same church as his neighbor. In 1869, the first contract school was established, which schools at first consisted only of day schools, later reservation and nonreservation boarding schools being developed. This plan was abandoned in 1900, when the several societies with some exceptions took over their own schools, paying their own expenses.

The work in the mission schools consists of training along elementary lines such as is given in the public schools. No professional schools are maintained. However, industrial education is carried on along such lines as agriculture and

stock raising, the various trades, domestic science, certain branches of arts and crafts, especially those arts which are primarily Indian. Some schools and missions have given a great deal of effort to forward the sale of such articles as are produced by the Indians under their charge, thereby enabling them to earn a comfortable livelihood.

At the mission schools, instruction is given along religious lines of the particular denomination having charge of the mission, and the children are expected to attend religious services. Not only are instruction and services held in the strictly mission schools, but in many of the Government reservation and nonreservation boarding schools certain portions of the buildings are assigned by the superintendent to the workers from the several churches who may hold services on Sunday, and mid-week instruction may also be given, two hours a week being devoted to the latter work.

The transformation of the American Indian, under this tutelage, from a barbarian to a civilized man is regarded as almost miraculous, most particularly when one considers that it has been only within the last half century that intensive training along educational lines has been given by missionary societies.

In the early days of the missions, when western land was not so valuable, it was the practice of the missionaries to go among the Indians and take up such quantities of land as would be necessary to support their plants, holding these lands, it might be said, by right of occupancy with the consent of the Indian tribes. Later, when the Indian country was scheduled and allotted to the Indians, the following was incorporated into what is known as the "General Allotment Act." (24 Stat. L., 390) :

"And if any religious society or other organization is now occupying any of the public lands to which this act is applicable, for religious or educational work among the Indians, the Secretary of the Interior is hereby authorized to confirm such occupation to such society or organization, in quantity not exceeding one hundred and sixty acres in any one tract, so long as the same shall be so occupied, on such terms as he shall deem just; but nothing herein contained shall change or alter any claim of such society for religious or educational purpose heretofore granted by law."

Sundry legislation has authorized issuance of patents for land found to be so used at the time of the legislation. Missions have been enabled, through this possession, to be practically self-supporting, at least so far as farm products are concerned.

The report of the Indian Office shows that in 1923 there were 410 Protestant and 240 Catholic missionaries engaged in work among the Indians, and a total of 41,072 Protestant and 52,316 Catholic church-going Indians attending 991 churches. These statistics do not include the Five Civilized Tribes of Oklahoma, who are largely Protestant.

MISSIONARY HEADQUARTERS

Baptist:

American Baptist Home Missionary Society, 23 East 26th St., New York, N. Y.

Southern Baptist Convention, Home Missionary Board, 1004 Healey Building, Atlanta, Ga.

Woman's American Baptist Home Mission Society, 276 Fifth Ave., New York, N. Y.

Catholic:

Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, 2021 H St., N. W., Washington, D. C.

Christian Reformed Church:

Board of Heathen Missions, Christian Reformed Church, 737 Madison Ave., S. E., Grand Rapids, Mich.

Congregational:

American Missionary Association, 287 Fourth Ave., New York, N. Y.

Disciple or Christian:

United Christian Missionary Society, 1501 Locust St., St Louis, Mo.

Evangelical:

Central Board of Home Missions, Evangelical Synod of North America, 130 Chatham Road, Columbus, Ohio.

Free Methodist:

General Missionary Board, Free Methodist Church of North America, 1132 Washington Boulevard, Chicago, Ill.

Friends:

Associated Executive Committee of Friends on Indian Affairs, 1226 Stephen Girard Building, Philadelphia, Pa.

Lutheran:

Board of Home Missions and Church Extension, United Lutheran Church, York, Pa.

Mennonite:

Board of Foreign Missions, General Conference, Mennonite, Goessel, Kans.

Methodist Episcopal:

Board of Home Missions and Church Extension of M. E. Church, 17th and Arch Streets, Philadelphia, Pa.

Women's Home Missionary Society, M. E. Church, Allendale, N. J.
Joint Committee on Indian Work of the M. E. Church, 740 Rush St., Chicago, Ill.

Methodist Episcopal, South:

Board of Missions, M. E. Church South, 810 Broadway, Nashville, Tenn.

Moravian:

Board of Church Extension of the American Moravian Church, Bethlehem, Pa.

Presbyterian:

Board of Home Missions of the Presbyterian Church, U. S. A., 156 Fifth Ave., New York, N. Y.

Executive Committee of Home Missions, 1522 Hurt Bldg., Atlanta, Ga.

Women's Board of Home Missions of the Presbyterian Church, U. S. A., 156 Fifth Ave., New York, N. Y.

Protestant Episcopal:

National Council of the Protestant Episcopal Church, 281 Fourth Ave., New York, N. Y.

Reformed:

Women's Board of Domestic Missions, Reformed Church of America, 25 East 22d Street, New York, N. Y.

Board of Home Missions, Reformed Church in the United States, 15th and Race Streets, Philadelphia, Pa.

United Presbyterian:

Board of Home Missions, 209 Ninth Street, Pittsburgh, Pa.

Woman's General Missionary Society, United Presbyterian Church in North America, 95 Trenton Avenue, Wilkesburg, Pa.

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